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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on leadership development, especially on efforts that promote youth engagement as a youth development strategy. Part 1 is an edited version of the publication, "Youth Leadership for Development: Civic Activism as a Component of Youth Development Programming." It provides an overview of youth development theory, including an examination of positive youth development, and examines the current disconnection between youth development and civic engagement, some of the challenges faced by each field, and potential links between them. It offers recommendations of a "design team" for promoting civic engagement and positive youth development. Much of the information and findings of Part 1 was gathered through research which included telephone interviews and surveys of foundation staffs and youth leaders and through convening and documenting the work of the design team. Part 2 features the reflections of the Ford Foundation Program Officer responsible for this work of how youth development is evolving in an atmosphere of enthusiasm toward youth participation and youth engagement. It explains the process of establishing the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative, a learning network of 16 community-based organizations, representing pluralistic constituencies, in which young people are actively working for change. The report concentrates principally on civic activism, defined as direct action in support of or in opposition to an issue relating to the civil affairs of people at the neighborhood, local, regional, state, national, and global levels. (Contains 27 references.) (BT)

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Broadening the Bounds of Youth Development

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Broadening the Bounds of Youth Development

Introduction

Leaders, it has been said, are dealers in hope. Nowhere is this maxim more evident than in the context of youth, and so it is fortunate that the field of youth development is experiencing a resurgent interest in youth leadership development. For young people leadership development meets a number of needs, including opportunities for relationships with caring adults, peer group support, and meaningful engagement in community and civic life. While providing occasion for development of a range of skills, including critical thinking, writing, public speaking, planning, and group dynamics, leadership development for young people also has the potential to create a more engaged citizenry.

A long-time mainstay of national youth programs, youth leadership training remains at the center of the oldest and best-known youth development and youth-serving organizations in the nation. Because the development of leadership capacity among young people is a process occurring over time, it fits neatly into the developmental process of young people.

The rediscovery, however, of youth leadership development as a core component of positive youth development strategies and programs has an even more significant impact: it validates a growing recognition within the philanthropic community and among leadership theorists that personal and social development are essential conditions for strengthening a community's capacity to respond to its problems and build its future. This understanding has led a number of foundations—the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation, to name just a few—to actively pursue broad-based leadership development strategies and initiatives in an effort to address issues of personal and social development.

A complementary strategy is civic engagement, which has re-emerged as a viable means for young people to develop and exercise leadership while effecting concrete changes in their communities. In recognizing that young people are capable of addressing societal problems and concerns and providing a forum for them to do so, civic engagement can be a dynamic and powerful strategy. Through civic engagement, young people's ideas and energy can contribute

meaningfully as they participate in community building, work toward social change, and apply their leadership skills, all the while gaining access to services, supports, and opportunities that facilitate their own development.

Particularly for youth who are struggling with issues of identity formation and the differences engendered by race, class, gender, and sexuality, civic engagement provides a safe and positive forum in which to work on or through these issues. Many of these young people remain disengaged from traditional youth development opportunities while participating in a larger set of institutions and forces in society that in many instances are not working well for them. For these marginalized young people, youth leadership and civic engagement, it seems, can be successfully combined into an effective strategy for achieving youth development outcomes.

The Ford Foundation's approach to youth development programming

The Ford Foundation's work in the area of youth development focuses on the social and economic factors that influence human development with the goal of improving the well being of children and families. Guided by the belief that people from economically disadvantaged or otherwise disempowered communities must be the catalysts for change and a better future, the Foundation builds the capacity of low-income communities to create supportive environments. Likewise, the youth development programming seeks to enhance the ability of young people from economically disadvantaged communities to successfully make the transition from adolescence into economic self-sufficiency, responsible adulthood, and engaged citizenship.

Since the mid-1990s, the Foundation has relied heavily on the guiding principles of positive youth development, which is based on an asset rather than deficit model, to inform the selection of projects and the development of initiatives. While the positive youth development framework identified by Karen Pittman and others (Pittman 1991, Pittman and Irby 1996, Pittman et al, 2000) represents a much needed advance in youth development approaches, it was developed in response to a western urban youth context, and it reflects that bias. Therefore, to make the framework applicable in a broader array of settings, the youth development strategy has evolved to consider more fully the interface between individuals and social aspects of human development, structural conditions, and social participation as experienced by youth.

The Ford Foundation has recently redoubled its focus on leadership development. Most leadership theorists believe that the skills critical for effective leadership, including the capacity to understand and interact with others, are developed most deeply in adolescence and young adulthood. Given these relationships, the Ford Foundation decided to support efforts that promote youth engagement as a youth development strategy. Through the Children, Youth and Families program, the Foundation began to examine this concept at work in the field, foster it, and help make possible its conscientious adoption by others, and incorporate the points of next paragraph

This publication is a product of some of that work. It is produced by the Ford Foundation in partnership with the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development. Part I is an edited version of a previous publication by Ford and the Innovation Center, *Youth Leadership for Development: Civic Activism as a Component of Youth Development Programming* (Roach et al). It provides an overview of youth development theory, including an examination of positive youth

development, and examines the current disconnection between youth development and civic engagement, some of the challenges faced by each field, and potential links between them. Part I concludes with recommendations of a "design team" for promoting civic engagement and positive youth development. Much of the information and findings of this part of the report were gathered through research by Innovation Center staff along with consultant Lisa Y. Sullivan, president of LISTEN, Inc. The research included telephone interviews and surveys of foundation staffs and youth leaders, and convening and documenting the work of the design team.

Part II features the reflections of the Ford Foundation Program Officer responsible for this work of how youth development is evolving in an atmosphere of enthusiasm toward youth participation and youth engagement. Furthermore, she explains the process of establishing the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative (YLDI), a learning network of sixteen community based organizations, representing pluralistic constituencies, in which young people are actively working for change.

There are many forms of youth engagement. This publication concentrates principally on civic activism, defined as direct action in support of or in opposition to an issue relating to the civil affairs of people at the neighborhood, local, regional, state, national, and global levels. Such action might involve individuals, organizations, and institutions engaged in public education and advocacy campaigns, research and public policy, nonviolent public demonstrations, resource development, or participation in the democratic process (Roach et al. 1999).

Today, the intersection of youth development and civic activism is the focus of much attention and enthusiasm. There is much to be gained from their interface, and while challenges and questions remain, the road ahead seems paved with promise.

Part I

Civic Engagement and Leadership: Promoting a Positive Youth Development Outcome for Disengaged Youth

The Positive Youth Development Framework

The process commonly called "youth development" is one that most young people in the United States pass through on their way to adulthood. During adolescence, ideally, young people receive support from their peers, families, caring adults, schools, and community institutions, thereby increasing the likelihood of "positive" youth development and improved life outcomes. Yet even under the most ideal circumstances, adolescence is often a time of turbulence. It is a stage of rapid development physically, psychologically, and socially; young people are confronted simultaneously with issues of identity formation and self-worth while acquiring a broad set of skills needed to function as an adult.

For young people growing up in low-income communities the challenges of adolescence are exacerbated by a range of factors, including a lack of economic opportunity for their parents, family instability, inadequate schools, and the prevalence of drugs, violence, social isolation, and, in the case of ethnic and racial minorities, racism. Most low-income youth enter adolescence having already experienced many of these challenges. Consequently, adolescence often represents one of the last opportunities to intervene in the human development of young people and help them overcome the academic, health, and social deficits associated with growing up in poverty. Moreover, adolescence represents one of the last opportunities to access young people in groups, through schools, community centers, and peer groups. For society, adolescence represents the final chance to intervene in the lives of young people before welfare dependency, limited productivity, and other social problems become life patterns that ultimately are more costly as later interventions become necessary.

Since the 1950s, there has been a steady growth in social programs and policies aimed at helping low-income youth meet the additional burdens imposed by the confluence of adolescence and poverty. The Ford Foundation was extensively involved in the development of these social programs and policies, many of which focused on preventing specific problem behaviors such as pregnancy, school failure, and unemployment. Beginning in the late 1980s, the Foundation began moving away from a focus on prevention of problem behavior, embracing instead the promotion of positive development and preparation for adulthood among low-income youth.

Undergirding the Foundation's conceptual shift to positive youth development was the work of Michele Cahill, currently Senior Program Officer with the Carnegie Corp. of New York, and Karen Pittman, Executive Director of the Forum for Youth Investment. As co-founders of the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development, Cahill and Pittman set forth the positive youth development framework. They argued that the term "youth development" refers to the ongoing process in which all young people are engaged and invested—even in the absence of family supports and formal programs.

All young people will seek ways to:

1. Meet their basic physical and social needs; and
2. Build the individual assets or competencies (knowledge, skills, relationships, values) they feel are needed to participate successfully in adolescence and adult life.

In other words, youth development is an inevitable process, and depending on the influences young people are exposed to, their development can either be negative or positive.

A set of three guiding principles is now routinely used to develop programs and policies and to evaluate the outcomes of positive youth development. The first principle of positive youth development says that society must have a vision of what it wants for its young people. The second principle underscores the fact that young people grow up in communities, not programs, and efforts to promote positive development must be focused on the overall context in which that development occurs. The third principle holds that youth in partnership with adults have critical roles to play as stakeholders in all efforts to promote positive youth development (Pittman and Irby, 1995).

For the most part, positive youth development outcomes often contain broad statements about how we want young people to be good citizens, good neighbors, good workers, and good parents. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development has pushed further, articulating a general list of competencies that we want for young people (Carnegie Corporation 1989). These include academic, cognitive, civic, emotional, physical, vocational, and social and cultural competence. Beyond these expected competencies, an important set of secondary outcomes exists—those that allow young people to be not only competent, but also connected, caring, and committed (Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2000). In addition to skills, young people must have a solid sense of safety and structure, membership, and belonging, as well as mastery of a sense of purpose, responsibility, and self-worth.

In short, all young people, affluent or low-income, above grade or out-of-school, need a mix of services, supports, and opportunities in order to stay engaged. Promotion of positive youth development requires that young people have stable places, services, and instruction. But they also need supports—relationships and networks that provide nurturing, standards, and guidance, as well as opportunities for trying new roles, mastering challenges, and contributing to family and community.

The assumption that disengaged, disadvantaged, or marginalized youth must be "fixed" before they can be developed runs counter to what is known about human motivation and adolescent development. Unfortunately, too many youth workers and youth development organizations fail to recognize that adolescent development is uneven, ongoing, complex, and profoundly influenced by the quality of the relationships, environments, and commitments in which young people are involved. As a consequence, programs and organizations that seek the participation and involvement of "at-risk" youth frequently have a difficult time with the recruitment and retention of adolescent participants. While problems must be addressed, it is a commitment to development that motivates growth, change, and participation.

In the final analysis, youth development must consider all the dynamics of human growth and development while providing young people with the places, skills, and opportunities to achieve positive youth development outcomes. At the community level, there must be the presence of caring adults who want to facilitate youth development by creating spaces and places that value the participation, ideals, voice, and decision-making process of young people. Without these conditions, youth and community development cannot occur.

Civic Activism and Leadership: Promoting a Positive Youth Development Outcome for Disengaged Youth

While theory supports the merging of youth engagement and youth development practice, the truth of the matter—especially at the community level—is that they have tended to be ships passing in the night. Civic engagement and youth development practitioners, with some notable exceptions, rarely collaborate or share strategies. Moreover, adults tend to serve as youth development practitioners, while youth and young adults prefer to participate in civic activism. This reality is most pronounced among youth who are either disengaged or marginalized within their communities.

This dichotomy is further aggravated by the failure of many youth development practitioners to deal effectively and in a sustained manner with the twin issues of youth identity and meaningful engagement of young people in the leadership and decision-making processes of community-based institutions and organizations. Identity issues, for example, are critical for youth development, and too many youth organizations and programs simply fail to address the developmental needs of adolescents who want to examine issues like sexuality, race, class, and gender. For many marginalized youth, socialization and discrimination have had profound negative effects on their development. Failure to address issues pertaining to the barriers in their lives further alienates them from structured youth development programs and organizations. Presenting these young people with opportunities to express how society has thwarted their development often helps them to move forward in positive ways. Dealing with these difficult topics of gender, class, sexuality, and race has major implications for the content of youth development programs, the method of program delivery, staff training and development, and the creation of a safe environment that encourages all youth to act on and explore their own truths.

Disturbingly, many youth development organizations and programs have failed to take seriously the need for youth participation, voice, input, and power in the decision-making process. Unfortunately, too many youth development programs and organizations have not practiced youth empowerment. In these programs, young people have not been viewed as partners, often creating an organizational culture of "adultism"—all those behaviors and attitudes flowing from assumptions that adults are superior to young people and are entitled to act upon young people without agreement or consent.

Many marginalized youth feel that traditional youth development agencies do not really listen to young people, nor do they support the initiatives of youth, validate their thinking, or welcome their ideas. At the same time, these young people believe traditional youth service providers do not trust young people in decision-making and leadership positions. Many youth believe they must pursue youth-led civic engagement to find respect, leadership development opportunities,

and real information about the way the world works. The failure of youth development practitioners to provide adolescents with the appropriate developmental opportunities to explore identity, independence, and decision-making is no small matter. The continued alienation of adolescents, particularly those who are disengaged from society's mainstream, has tremendous implications for the future outcomes of community youth development.

For these reasons, civic activism has increasingly become a strategy for achieving youth leadership development and the civic participation of marginalized young people. While civic activism has the potential to contribute significantly to community youth development, several critical issues must be addressed:

1. Civic activism most often tends to be led by young adult youth workers with little, if any, exposure to human growth and development theory or training. These young adults in their twenties and thirties tend to work with marginalized adolescents with whom they are capable of building strong relationships, even though they often lack a youth development background to adequately support these young people. In low-income communities of color, this lack of preparation can become a serious issue given the chronic problems these communities frequently face. Young adult youth workers are regularly overwhelmed by the services needed by the young people they seek to empower and develop as leaders.

2. Civic activism is often initiated as a spontaneous response to a community injustice or problem. As a consequence, civic activist organizations, projects, and movements often lack a theory of change without which it is difficult for civic activists to evaluate their work, articulate program goals and objectives, or identify and measure outcomes. For the most part, this shortcoming has significantly hindered civic activism from gaining widespread support and recognition as a viable strategy for obtaining positive youth development.

3. Finally, most civic activism takes place within the structural context of non-profit organizations. When young people in their twenties and thirties start non-profit businesses to undertake civic activism, they are also taking on the responsibilities of non-profit management. Management in any context requires information and skills; too often young adult youth workers—especially those who work directly with marginalized youth—lack the skills and information to manage people and resources effectively.

The challenges facing civic activism differ significantly from the issues on the radar screens of traditional youth development, yet they are most likely the harbingers of things to come. Dealing openly and honestly with issues of identity, adultism, power, and control will require significant changes in the attitudes and opinions of adult professionals and organizational leadership. On the other hand, the preparation of a new generation of youth workers engaged in positive youth development through youth leadership and civic activism is a possibility within reach. Through technical assistance and support, positive youth development can be strengthened by integrating the theory, information, and skills of civic activism, coupled with non-profit management skills, while simultaneously strengthening the developmental outcomes of the civic activists.

Recommendations of the Design Team for Promoting Civic Activism and Positive Youth Development

In deepening its efforts to explore the intersection of civic engagement and youth development, the Ford Foundation commissioned the Innovation Center to convene a diverse, intergenerational group of youth leaders, foundation program officers, and practitioners in the fields of community organizing, community development, and social justice. (See Appendix A for a list of members.) This "design team" was charged with bringing into focus the necessary conditions that must exist in order for youth to be involved, and to participate as leaders, in the social change process.

This learning community came together in a series of meetings to examine lessons and exchange information. The potential for achieving youth development outcomes through civic activism, the design team agreed, creates an opportunity to intentionally support and foster learning about a youth development strategy that targets the leadership development and civic engagement of marginalized youth. As young adult youth workers develop their potential to focus on civic activism through positive community youth development, it is reasonable to expect that they, like adults, will benefit from intermediary structures that provide opportunities for support and training.

Toward this end, the design team outlined six specific recommendations for promoting civic activism and positive youth development:

1. Foster the development and documentation of promising practices by convening a national network of young adult youth workers;

2. Provide technical assistance and support for civic activist organizations at the grassroots level through locally based capacity-building intermediaries;

3. Create a center where young leaders and young adult youth workers can meet together to get support of all kinds, exchange ideas and strategies, and prepare to be better facilitators, trainers, and managers of youth development programs and organizations;

4. Provide opportunities for US-based activists to make global connections to civic activism through international exchanges, visits, and interactions;

5. Provide support and training opportunities for adult allies/facilitators of civic activism and leadership development; and

6. Strengthen the youth development profession by conducting research, documentation, and dissemination on strategies for achieving youth development outcomes through civic activism.

In addition, design team participants recommended that funders make the grant application process for youth-led youth development initiatives more open, creative, accessible, and specifically targeted for young people. Most importantly, design team members said, civic activism seeking to engage marginalized youth in positive youth development should be funded, wherever possible, at the grassroots or neighborhood and community level, rather than at the national level.

Part II

Notes from a Program Officer: the Case for Youth Engagement

Inca A. Mohamed

In recent years, the topic of youth participation on behalf of themselves and their community has grown tremendously. Numerous foundations are now either making grants or exploring grantmaking in this area. Indeed, it might be difficult to find a program in which there is not at least some attempt to recognize that young people have a significant contribution to make in their own development and that of their communities—and now, in the present, not just in the future when they become adults.

The idea that young people and civic engagement belong together is not a new one, and in some ways it has been thoroughly tested. Since time immemorial, young people have often been on the front lines of social movements, bravely questioning what others merely accepted, and energetically demanding—if not always winning—justice, equality, and freedom. The US civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century is a prominent example of the power and possibility of youth activism, one that continues to inspire its successors. That struggle wrought enormous positive changes—and on every level, from the individual youths who grew as leaders to the national character and culture itself, which continues to make its way down the path toward racial equity.

My own attraction to youth work came as a result of the kind of possibility this social action engendered. I came of age in the late 1960s and early '70s, a time of great social change and engagement. Some observers bemoan the indulgences of the era; I and many others, however, were inspired and informed by its significant positive contributions—to greater racial equity, increased gender equity, heightened concern for the environment, and a building challenge to discrimination based on sexual orientation. But these were not changes that would be completed in one decade, and youth work made enormous sense as a suitable place to invest in long-term incremental change.

We live today in a time when youth engagement has particular import and potential. Part of what makes this such a powerful time is the shift taking place in adult/youth relationships, one that I would argue is as fundamental as the change that has taken place in gender relations and in relations between minority and majority ethnicities and cultures. It is the information age; as a result of technological advances in communications, no longer do adults necessarily have greater access to information and thus greater knowledge, which is the key to adults' ability to maintain control over youth. Of course young people continue to need adults, but the nature of that need is evolving in a way that makes possible a more equitable youth/adult relationship.

The Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development have partnered in an effort to broaden the parameters of youth development and strengthen civic activism. We have learned, and continue to learn, much from this work. Here I will touch on three observations: the continuum of youth participation, the universality of the application of

civic activism as a youth development strategy, and the potential of civic activists as youth workers of tomorrow.

A Continuum of Youth Participation

Young people today are involved in their communities and engaged in voluntarism in unprecedented numbers. Their social participation escapes some observers' scrutiny, however, because youth today are "choosing to be civically engaged through direct, one-on-one service in and on behalf of their communities, rather than through efforts to change broad social institutions like their predecessors" (Gibson 2000).

Youth involvement on the individual level can be seen as a step on a continuum toward engaged and purposeful action on a more collective level. At one end of the spectrum is youth service, or service-learning, in which young people as volunteers perform helpful, humanitarian deeds. It can be seen as the experiential component of civic education; it can help students to see a connection between classroom learning and the "real world." Indicators of success in this case include increased academic performance, increased interest in school, and an increase in feelings of altruism.

But youth service has its limits. "As proponents of [a more comprehensive] approach are fond of saying, 'Volunteering in a soup kitchen is nice, but it's not enough. Young people must understand why there are soup kitchens in the first place and then take action to address the structural systems that perpetuate poverty and other social problems.'" (Gibson 2000)

This more deliberate and change-oriented action describes the other end of the youth participation continuum: youth engaged in civic activism, which again is defined as direct action in support of or in opposition to an issue relating to the civil affairs of people at the neighborhood, local, regional, state, national, and global levels. Such action might involve individuals, organizations, and institutions engaged in public education and advocacy campaigns, research and public policy, nonviolent public demonstrations, resource development, or participation in the democratic process. Indicators of success would include participation in activities, including voting, designed to impact public policy.

The civic activism approach is especially important given the need for opportunities for older youth. "Too often, the opportunities laid out for younger children and youth come to an abrupt stop, leaving older youth with no place to go and nothing to do. Young people themselves have been the strongest advocates for change, pushing program planners to go beyond their focus on preparation and activity to give young people more responsibilities within organizations and help them have an impact in their communities" (Pittman et al 2000, *Youth as Effective Citizens*). Engaging in social change helps them develop transferable skills such as writing, public speaking, critical thinking, and improved group skills.

In between youth service and youth in civic activism are other strategies representing stages on the continuum: peer education, youth leadership development, youth governance, and youth in philanthropy. Programs often use a combination of these strategies, in which young people in varying degrees have central roles to play as stakeholders in efforts to promote positive youth development. The closer they get to the civic activism end of the spectrum, the higher the power

as stakeholders for youth, and the more likely the chances to contribute to instilling lifelong civic participation and create opportunities to develop new leaders.

Universal Application

"We take ideas seriously," President Susan Berresford has said of the Ford Foundation, "first by incubating them, second by promoting them, and third by exploring them in other countries". The idea of civic activism as a youth development strategy was no exception to this formula.

Today is an especially auspicious and important time to consider youth strategies globally. Youth comprise a large and acutely vulnerable segment of the world population. According to UN estimates, those below the age of 30 may constitute as much as 55 percent of the world's population by 2005. In the least developed countries of the world, the figure may be closer to 70 percent. Today, more than one billion people in the world today are between the ages of 15 and 24, and 85 percent of them live in developing countries (UNFPA 1999). Worldwide, poverty and injustice continue to stymie the healthy and productive development of young people. Key problems include access to education, health care, and gainful employment. In some parts of the world, war, civil unrest, and gender discrimination further complicate these problems. Of particular concern because of its impact at both societal and individual levels is HIV/AIDS, since one half of all new HIV infections are in young people between ages 15 and 24 (UNFPA 1999).

Youth movements for social justice are a global phenomenon. Young people fought against apartheid in South Africa, and they are fighting for indigenous people's rights in Mexico. There is no reason why the benefits of civic engagement as part of a mix of youth development strategies would not pertain outside the United States. We are seeing how it works, in fact, through the YLDI partner organizations in South Africa.

Young Civic Activists: Youth Workers of Tomorrow?

Where do youth workers come from? How do we ensure that those who work with youth have a thorough understanding of core principles and best practices? Historically youth workers—those legions of people whose central work involves young people—have had little in the way of formal training. There is no professional degree, no certification process. It might also seem to some that there is little uniformity among the ranks. In my years in the youth development field, however, I have noticed a pattern among youth workers: not only do they tend overwhelmingly to be people who have a desire to serve, to give back to their communities, but many youth workers were also social activists at some point in their own youth.

What if we were to pay attention to the young people involved now in social change? Many of them already have highly developed skills in critical analysis, strategic planning, and development of action steps. With youth development knowledge, these individuals could be a committed, skilled, and ready force of youth workers.

YLDI: Broadening the Parameters of Youth Development and Strengthening Civic Activism

The product of two years of exploration and discovery and the thoughtful, expert contributions of the youth development design team featured in Part I of this publication, YLDI is an investment in two intertwined beliefs: youth are indispensable actors in creating a more just world, and civic engagement is an indispensable tool for youth development practitioners.

We began the process of identifying the US community based organizations and international fellows that make up the YLDI partnership with a wide survey of community based organizations that involved young people and were interested in helping these young people navigate through this period of their lives. We also looked at groups that just wanted to help young people and were working toward this goal through civic activism. After collecting recommendations from the design team, I traveled across the country and met with some two dozen such organizations. I came home with my faith in the civic activism strategy not only intact but in fact bolstered immensely. And I knew that our challenge in securing the right community based organizations for YLDI would be not finding them, but choosing among them. Sure enough, our request for proposals yielded more than 100 proposals.

Out of these, we selected the final dozen US groups. In selecting the groups, we deliberately and consciously kept an eye not only on the individual organizations, but also on the group we were building: we wanted *diversity*. In the end, we were gratified to see an assembly of organizations working on issues of Asian immigrants and Asian and Pacific American youth, suburban white youth, gay and lesbian youth, Latino youth, Native American youth, and low-income African American youth in the American South, Oakland, California, and New York City.

What these groups have in common is their work toward social justice for the disempowered. The youth development framework has been criticized for failing to consider the context of some young people's lives: is it realistic to hope for the same desired outcomes for youth from all income levels and social strata? While this analysis has some validity, no one could suggest that it would be acceptable to set a lower standard of outcomes for low-income or otherwise marginalized youth. We must then find appropriate approaches. Civic activism as a youth development strategy has particular promise, I believe, for young people who are negatively affected because of racism, sexism, classism, or discrimination based on immigrant status or sexual orientation. The process through which youth develop a critical analysis of their circumstances and then develop both a personal and collective response can be deeply empowering. All of the YLDI groups had a process to help young people take a critical look at the stereotypes about them and devise ways of dealing with negative impressions of them and their community.

In looking at the groups individually, two selection criteria, among many others, were particularly important: One, the organization must display a commitment to positive youth development principles. While it was not necessary for the group to be steeped in youth development expertise—they need not, for example, use any particular terminology—they did need to incorporate certain practices in their work, such as youth/adult partnerships and youth as decision makers.

The other key condition was the organization's ability to accept that YLDI would be a foundation-driven initiative: we had clear objectives at the Foundation that we wanted to meet, and the

groups' participation was integral to meeting them. We would, to be sure, provide support to build capacity in the area they had identified in their proposal. But the groups would also be expected to document their work so that a deeper understanding of using civic activism as a youth development strategy could be developed. By the end of the three-year initiative, we will have learned much, and we will widely disseminate our findings.

A significant element in the YLDI framework is that the management of the initiative is carried out by an intermediary organization—the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, whose staff has years of experience in the field. By providing technical assistance to the YLDI community based organizations, the groups' youth development practices become more intentional.

The Bottom Line: Youth Development

Organizations and projects that involve young people as integral and respected leaders and participants clearly enrich their endeavors: Young people's exuberance and optimism alone can make significant additions to social change efforts. What's more, every young person, like every adult, has unique abilities and experience that can expand the capacities and outcomes of these efforts. This is an unquestionably positive effect. Still, as a Children, Youth and Family Program Officer, the central purpose for me of civic activism as a youth development strategy *is* youth development. It is important to be clear on the goals of any youth engagement activity because it informs the selection of activities. (Gibson 2000)

Here is a question I have pondered: When young people are working on, say, environmental issues, is the common denominator youth or the environment? We often point to the "two-for-one" value of young people's civic engagement: youth grow and develop at the same that conditions are improved at some level of society. Indeed, the work of the YLDI organizations blurs together social change and youth development. But central, driving force of YLDI is youth development, which it addresses *through* civic activism. Said another way, this youth development approach views youth civic activism as part of a developmental process that helps young people in the process of developing a personal identity, a sense of responsibility, caring, feelings of connection, and competence.

The determination to focus on youth development is a particular challenge, because youth itself is not a static condition. When we decide, then, that we are focusing on youth participation primarily and the environment secondarily, we "essentialize" youth and may in a way make it more difficult for individuals to continue to find a space for their voice as they move out of adolescence and young adulthood. At the same time, we must be as clear as possible about our intentions. At the end of the day, we must evaluate our progress against our stated goals.

YLDI focuses on youth development, but other foundations and programs will choose to make civic engagement their top priority. No matter—there is room for all who are interested in youth development, youth engagement, civic activism, and social change. For now, these strategies are the subject of much attention and favor. Before the inevitable waning begins, we have much work to do.

Appendix A

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Appendix B

YLDI Theory of Change

ACTIVITIES & SUPPORTS			SHORT TERM OUTCOMES
PHASE I	PHASE II	PHASE III	
Scouting ■ Exploratory meetings & conversations ■ Review of literature Design Team Meetings & Interviews Creation & Presentation of YLDI Rationale to The Ford Foundation's Board Selection Process ■ Development of selection criteria for the YLDI Learning Group	Learning Activities ■ Annual Meetings ■ Annual Site Visits ■ Project Team Reflection Meetings Individual grants from Ford to support each participating organization's local project goals & activities Creation & dissemination of printed resource materials Documentation Mini grants & technical assistance to build organizational capacity of grantees Field Networking & Dissemination YLDI Consulting sub-groups to inform: ■ Evaluation ■ Communications ■ Meeting Planning Site Exchanges between YLDI learning group members	ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS & DISTILLATION (External evaluation process & strategic placement of products)	Stimulate research, practice & policy around the practice of integrating civic activism & youth development. *Indicators:* ■ *Research Reports/Papers* ■ *New Funding* Youth Development practitioners can access models and information on how to integrate civic activism into youth development programming. *Indicators:* ■ *Existence, distribution & use of models* YLDI grantees have increased organizational capacity to utilize civic activism as a component of their youth development work. *May be evaluated through self & IC assessments and documentation of individual stories.* *Indicators:* ■ *Supporting organizational systems in place* ■ *Demonstrated commitment to promoting this work.*

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